

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

No. 437 Fifth Week Michaelmas Term 2021

Both Oxford and Cambridge are currently looking for their next Vice-Chancellors. Cambridge has the greater urgency since Stephen Toope departs in 2022 and Louise Richardson only in 2023, having served her full seven-year – actually nearer eight-year – stint. What better time to consider lessons learned.

The lavish 18-page advertisement (from Perrett Laver, as Oxford's head-hunter) on the last occasion spelled out the "person specification" including: "the academic credibility and intellectual rigour necessary to lead one of the world's foremost universities; a deep personal commitment to the power of education and research...; exceptional leadership credentials...and a visionary and consensual, yet determined, style of leadership; organisational skills ...; integrity, resilience and a commitment to the values of fairness, transparency, equality and diversity".

How has Louise Richardson, Oxford's first female Vice-Chancellor, matched up to this impossible brief? What qualities should the Nominating Committee for the Vice-Chancellorship have most especially in mind for

Visionary – but how consensual?

the new appointment? Will they be brave enough to appoint an internal candidate – in the face of norms and expectations externally and at the risk of the usual charges of Oxford exceptionalism – if the best candidate comes from our own ranks?

The Vice-Chancellor's Oration earlier this term shows her strengths. It demonstrates her presentational skills and a caring tone initially focussed, unsurprisingly, on welfare

issues against the background of Covid ("we need now, more than ever, to be kind to one another and to ourselves"). But, equally, the tone is upbeat and noticeably ambitious (hinting, for example, at a "daring" undertaking of "an inspiring facility" in California) building unashamedly on our vaccine triumphs and world ranking. She paused as her speech came to a focus as follows: "*if you can take a single year, what innovations would you make. What would you like to see at Oxford that has never been seen before; what would you like to change?.... I hope that after this Oration... you will share these ideas and that they will circulate back to me. I am eager to hear them*".

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

We will continue to publish online editions of the *Oxford Magazine* and send emails to our online subscribers. We will also send emails to our print subscribers, where we have an email address for them, so that they continue to receive the *Magazine* in an available format.

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...and much more

There may be clues here to Louise Richardson's underlying approach to Oxford. As an outsider and internationalist she has perhaps always seen Oxford as too stuck in its old ways and in need of change. In her very first Oration, after nine months in the job, she spoke of "One Oxford", reflecting as far as one can tell her awareness of the potential for schisms between the University on the one hand and the colleges or Congregation on the other. She has brought in many 'external' appointments to positions of power¹ and allowed a 'growth agenda'² not only in new buildings but in student numbers – 10% in five years³ – unlike in any other comparable university². Our debt levels have soared. Will Oxford now be changed? Should it be?

The Vice-Chancellor has been lucky in the sense that money has been cheap and she arrived in the year when Oxford first took pole position in international league tables. But during the next decade everything is going to be very different; the realities of climate change will soon make concrete pouring unacceptable. As Barbara Harriss-White tells us in this issue, the capitalist idea of unending economic growth no longer makes any sense. We will need a new type of vision.

But what about the consensus? Has she really been "eager to hear"? As one would have expected of an expert on terrorism the Vice-Chancellor has been outstanding in her public defence of free speech. But ironically – and this is possibly what she may ultimately be remembered for – she has done nothing to promote or modernise our own most important forum for free speech, Congregation. As the *Magazine* has argued *ad nauseam* her time here has been marked by secrecy on the part of senior University officers, while an increasingly restrictive management of internal information channels has made impossible Congregation's proper role in overseeing major policy directions on a democratic basis.

To quote this year's Oration again: "*Oxford academics are, alas, not immune ... to the 'culture wars' that seek to harness difference of background or culture and foster antipathy between differ-*

ent social groups, or individuals holding opposing views. It saddens me to see early career researchers fearing for their reputations, or mature academics embroiled in disputes, as a result of engaging in public debate". What better way of bridging opposing views and encouraging consensus than Discussion meetings of Congregation? As noted in the Oration: "[A] habit of mutual respect, civility, tolerance, collaboration and seeking unity of purpose starts with us as a university. When we act as One Oxford, we model the practice we want to prosper....". What better model than Congregation? Why then has Council not been proactively and regularly initiating Congregation Discussion meetings as an obvious way of drawing us together on the important policy priorities?

In six months Council's next self-review is due. The last one, which recommended important and radical reforms of communication with Congregation, has not been implemented; the only clear consequence was an increase in the number of external members of Council, so that Congregation-elected members are now even further in a minority.

As we plan for our next Vice-Chancellor the Rhodes statue (the Rhodes Must Fall movement, about which Louise Richardson expressed her own views, was at its height when she arrived) is still in place. She will no doubt continue with the 'VC Open office' she started on her arrival: "*Students, faculty and all other members of staff are welcome to request an appointment. Slots are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The meetings will be in person and will last for 15 minutes. You may raise any topic.*" But in her remaining two years she will have much more still to do.

B.B., T.J.H

¹ Editorial, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 403, 0th Week, HT 2019.

² Editorial, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 399, 0th Week, MT 2018.

³ Editorial, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 410, 8th Week, TT 2019.



Reminders



Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership welcome COP26

As leaders from around the world meet in Glasgow for COP26, key organisations and businesses across Oxford have issued a letter to COP26 President.

The letter welcomes the start of the COP26 summit and highlights the need for concentrated action from Government.

The “Letter from Oxford”, which was sent to COP26 President, Alok Sharma, welcomes the Government’s leadership on climate change, but highlights that additional commitments are required in order to unlock faster decarbonisation at a local level.

The letter has been issued by the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership.

The letter highlights that while the Partnership has opportunities for collaborative action to reduce emissions, there is also a need for concentrated action from government to unlock progress across several areas, building on the commitments made in the Government’s Net Zero Strategy:

- **Long term and reliable funding** for energy efficiency building on learnings from the Green Homes Grant and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
- **Rapid investment in public and active transport** to support Oxford achieve a 25% reduction in road transport by 2030 and embed positive behaviour changes seen during the pandemic.
- **Coordinated market mechanisms for local flexibility and network reinforcement** to allow significant electrification of heat and transport, learning from innovative projects such as Local Energy Oxfordshire.

The ambition of Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership is to work with Government to accelerate the adoption of clean and sustainable energy in Oxford and across the UK.

What is the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership?

In February 2021, Oxford City Council held the Zero Carbon Oxford Summit which saw leaders from major businesses and organisations across the city give their support to the ambition of achieving net zero carbon emissions as a city by 2040.

The Summit brought together leaders from both City and County Councils, both universities, both hospital trusts, major businesses including BMW, Unipart and LandSec, transport providers, schools and further education colleges, anchored institutions, and other organisations that are strategically important to achieving a net zero city by 2040.

The work of the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership is informed by the Zero Carbon Oxford roadmap, which divides almost all the city’s emissions into the five sectors with the greatest climate impact - domestic, commercial, industry, institutional, and transport.

In the summer, the partnership approved the publication of the Zero Carbon Oxford roadmap, which models a pathway to net-zero 10 whole years ahead of the UK’s Government’s legal targets.

Following the timelines identified in the science-based roadmap, it is predicted that by 2040, action will have reduced Oxford’s carbon emissions by 88% from 2018 levels.

Find out more about the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership at www.zerocarbonoxford.com

End financing for all new fossil fuels

Dear Heads of State, Lead Negotiators and COP President,

We are millions of parents from all around the world, writing on behalf of the children we love. We demand that you end financing for all new fossil fuels now.

Our children are being poisoned by toxic pollution from burning fossil fuels with every breath they take. That burning is also the key driver of the climate crisis, which is ruining our children’s futures and destroying our only home.

Air pollution from fossil fuel combustion, and the bush- and wildfire smoke made worse by the climate crisis, lodges inside our children’s bodies, stunting the development of their lungs, brains and hearts. It causes and aggravates chronic diseases from asthma to cancer. Babies are poisoned before they’re born with soot breathed in by expectant mothers, which crosses the placental barrier and increases the chances of premature birth.

Air pollution means our children grow up suffering higher instances of mental health issues like anxiety and

depression, adding to the burden of deep distress they now feel about the future. One billion children are already facing extremely high risk of immediate harm from the devastating impacts of the climate crisis. Children of colour and in marginalised communities are the worst affected.

If the decisions your governments make at COP26 and beyond do not prioritise immediate and rapid emissions cuts from all fossil fuels – coal, oil, and gas – the damage to our children’s health and our climate will get far worse with terrifying speed. The IPCC has made this very clear. The pathway to a more stable and healthy future is also clear.

One of the crucial steps is to stop funding the search for new fossil fuel reserves. You can enact this immediately. There are already more than enough fossil fuels discovered to dangerously heat our planet beyond 1.5°C and keep poisoning our children’s air. Wasting taxpayers’ money to look for even more is madness.

Experts, including the IPCC, the IEA, economists, investors, and others have explained that it’s necessary – and possible – to stop all new fossil fuel development now. Per-

haps you didn't hear them. We are going to make sure you hear us.

We are a growing, dynamic movement of parents from all around the world. We make decisions every day for our children's long-term future, and here at COP26, so do you. You have a unique responsibility and opportunity to protect all children, present and future.

We know this is not easy. Fossil fuels are deeply entrenched in our economies and well-funded, vested interests will keep getting in the way of change, but the time for excuses is over.

As the biggest collaboration of parents on any single issue in history, we implore you to do what is necessary to safeguard the health and future of the world's children.

We demand you take the critical step to end financing and licencing for all new fossil fuel exploration today.

You have already committed to secure the Paris Agreement and take all steps necessary to keep global heating to below 1.5°C. Every head of state knows that developing nations need much more financial and technological support to transition economies away from fossil fuels, or to leapfrog the use of fossil fuels entirely, as they grow.

As we hug our children close, we fear for their health and well-being, now – and for the future they face. Children are the future, and they deserve to have one.

We call upon you to join us in doing everything necessary to keep our children safe.

Yours sincerely,

Global

Earth Mamas International
Mama's Footprint
Our Kids' Climate
Parents For Future Global
Parents for the Planet
Parents of the World
Blossom Antenatal
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Conscious connected parenting
DearTomorrow
ManagersForFuture
OneStepOocean
Parenting in a Changing Climate Group
Parents for Future Africa group
Permanent Referendum
Woke Mamas
World Moms Network

Argentina

Parents For Future Argentina
Comunidad y Cambio Asociación Civil

Australia

Australian Parents for Climate Action
Australian Parents For Climate Action Melbourne
ACT Sustainability Network
Ainslie Sustainability Group
AP4CA Newcastle
Australian Parents for Climate Action - East Sydney
Australian Parents For Climate Action - South Gold Coast
Australian Parents for Climate Action Blue Mountains

Australian Parents for Climate Action Brisbane
Australian Parents for Climate Action Canberra
Australian Parents for Climate Action Illawarra
Australian Parents for Climate Action Nipaluna/Hobart
Australian Parents for Climate Action Spearwood
Australian Parents for Climate Action: South Brisbane
Belgrave Lake Park Cottage Playgroup
Bendigo Family Nature Club
Cairns Scuba Mums
Centre for Climate Safety (previously Parents for Climate Safety)
Clarence Climate Action
Cloth bums - Greater Western Sydney
Coffs Coast Climate Action Group
Connecting 2 Culture
Cooma Mums
Darwin Parents for Climate Action
Eco Friendly Periods 4 Vic Schools
Geelong & Bellarine - Australian Parents For Climate Action
Gloucester NSW Environment Group
Gloucester Pre School & Early Years Learning Centre
Gloucester Transitions
Hawthorn grandparents, Adelaide
Hornsby Shire Climate Action
Inner North Melbourne Parents for Climate Action
Inner West Sydney Families for Climate Action

Knitting Nannas Against Gas
Knitting Nannas Balonne Loop
Knitting Nannas Hunter Loop
Newcastle Institute
North Gold Coast Parents and Friends for Climate Action
North Tasmania Australian Parents for Climate Action
Ocean Youth
Pakenham - Australian Parents for Climate Change
Parents for Climate Action Cairns
Parents for Climate Action North Shore
Periwinkles Family Day Care
Play For Change Tasmania
Safe Streets to School
Social Justice Advocates of the Sapphire Coast - Forces for Nature group
Social Workers for Climate Action
South Australian Parents for Climate Action
Southern Highlands Parents for Climate Action
Southern Sydney Christian Climate Coalition
Spell it out 100%
Sunshine Coast Australian Parents for Climate Action
Sydney AP4CA
Sydney Cargo Bikes
Tamworth Parents and Friends for Climate Action
The Wild South
The Wilderpeople
Thrive For Future
Thrive for future NEWCOMB
Thrive For Future, Friday's For Future
Wow Woy community garden
You Tell Our Kids

Austria

GrandparentsForFuture
Parents For Future Baden
Parents For Future Klosterneuburg
Parents For Future Oberösterreich
Parents for Future Purkersdorf
Parents for Future Tirol
Parents For Future Vienna
ParentsForFuture Austria
Parrns for Future Vorarlberg

Belgium

@economics, ecoNVERGE & CLEANconnect
Families for Climate
Grand-parents for the Climate
Mères au Front Belgique

Brazil

Famílias pelo Clima
Cameroon
Youth and Children for Development

Canada

Mères au front
Mères au front Brome-Missisquoi
Mères au front Montréal
Pour nos enfants / For Our Kids
Montreal

Babies for Climate Action - Vancouver
For Our Kids Canada
For Our Kids North Shore
For Our Kids Sunshine Coast
For Our Kids Vancouver
Fridays For Future Vancouver
Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet GASP
Mères au front - Rive-Sud
Mères au front de Laval et ses alliés.e.s
Mères au front de Rouyn-Noranda et leurs alliés.es
Mères au front d'Abitibi-Ouest
Mères au front Outaouais
Mères au Front Prescott-Russell
Mères au front St-Jean-sur-Richelieu
Mères au front-Manitoba

Chile

Fundacion Horizonte ciudadano

Colombia

Parents for future latam
Parents For Future Colombia

Cyprus

North Cyprus Mums

Czechia

Rodiče za klima Liberec

Denmark

Klimaforældre - Parents for Future Denmark

Ecuador

English play group in Quito

Finland

Aktivistimuttot - Activist Gran-nies
Finnish Climate Grandparents - (Ilmastoisovanhemmat - Klimatmoro- och farföräldrar)

France

Parents for future
Parents Pour Le CLimat
Unis Pour Le Climat

Germany

Christians for Future Leverkusen
P4P Hamburg
Parents for Future Germany
AG StopÖkozid@
Artists4Future Nbg
Bremen parents for future
Christians for Future
Christians for Future Brandenburg
Extinction Rebellion Familien
Extinction Rebellion Familien Göttingen
Fossil Free Berlin
Fridays for Future Landshut
Grantparents Hannover
KLIMA WANDEL KERPEN
Klimatreff Werl
O4F Kempen
Oldies for Future Nürnberg
Omas for Future Würzburg

Omas for Future, Regional Group Allgäu OS klimaneutral P4F Marktoberdorf P4F Munich Parents for Future Bad Hersfeld Parents for Future Bad Krozingen Parents For Future Berlin Parents for Future Bielefeld Parents for Future Bonn Parents for Future Bornheim/Swist- tal/Weilerswist Parents For Future Bruchsal Parents for Future Buchholz Parents for Future Darmstadt und Umgebung Parents for Future Dresden Parents for Future Duisburg Parents for Future Düsseldorf Parents for Future Essen Parents for Future Eutin Parents for Future Freiburg Parents for future Göttingen Parents for Future Gütersloh Parents for Future Hamburg Parents for Future Hameln / Weser- bergländ Parents for Future Hannover Parents For Future Heidelberg Parents for Future Heilbronn Parents for Future Herford Parents for future Herzogenaurach Parents for Future Juelich Parents for Future Kassel Parents for Future Köln Parents for future Kreis Viersen Parents for Future Landeshaupt- stadt Wiesbaden Parents For Future Lemgo Parents for Future Leverkusen Parents for Future Mainz Parents for Future München Parents for Future Münster Parents for future Neukirchen- Vluyn Parents For Future Nordfriesland Parents for Future Nürnberg Parents for Future Oberhausen Parents for Future Oberhavel Parents For Future Oldenburg Parents for Future Oy-Mittelberg Parents for Future Ravensburg Parents For Future Teltow-Fläming Parents for Future Tübingen Parents for Future Uckermark Parents for future Wetterau Parents for future Winsen Parents for Future Wismar/NWM Parents for Future Würzburg Parents4Future Bocholt Parents4future Deggendorf Parents4Future Frankenthal Parents4future Ortsgruppe Aachen ParentsFor FutureBorken Parentsforfuture Altkreis Lüdinghausen ParentsForFuture Regensburg People and Parents for Future Man- nheim People for Future Frankfurt People4Future PFF Schwerin Pff Sonthofen SAARLAND FOR FUTURE	Ghana Strategic Youth Network for Devel- opment India AMYAA NGO MIKC My Right To Breathe Parents against Pollution Saviour Convent School Group Shemrock Rampurhat Pre school Warrior Moms Warrior moms Punjab Ireland Elders for Earth Parents for future Mayo Mums Israel Parents for Climate Israel (Tel Aviv - Yafo parents association (P.T.A Parents for climate - Jezreel Vally Parents for climate - Ness Ziona Parents For Climate - Tel Aviv Parents for Climate Israel - HaSha- ron Parents for Climate Kiryat Tivon Parents for Future Modiin Parents for future TLV - Compost team Italy Parents for future Italia Bosch Casa dei bimbi Extinction Rebellion Families Tren- tino - South Tyrol Parents for future Parents For Future Arezzo Parents For Future Bologna Parents For Future Castelfranco Emilia (MO) Parents for future Ferrara Parents For Future Forlì Parents for Future Genoa Parents For Future Lomellina Parents for future Milano Parents For Future Palermo Parents for future Roma Parents for Future Tortona Parents For Future Venezia PFF Melegnano Japan CASE for Humanity Jordan Dibeen for Environmental Devel- opment Kenya CLIMATE CHANGE KENYA ORGANIZATION Parents for Future Kenya Latinoamerica PFF Latam Mexico Colectiva Zurciendo el planeta Padres por el Futuro MTY	Asociación Estatal de Padres de Fa- milia de Nuevo León Comité Ecológico Integral Gream Team Tonalli Papás FORMUS por el planeta PBS (Parents for a Better School) - San Roberto International School Campus San Agustín Unión Neoleonesa de Familia Netherlands ISH Parents Committee Parents for future Radical Being Community New Zealand Fridays For Future Aotearoa New Zealand Parents for Climate Aotearoa Whareroa Farm Education Co-Op Multiples Canterbury Nigeria Children's Centre Library, Univer- sity of Nigeria, Nsukka. Equity Watch Initiative Green Knowledge Foundation Parents for Future, Nigeria Norway Foreldrelofter Poland Fundacja Rodzice Mają Głos Fundacja "Biegamy z Sercem" Fundacja "Dziecko w Centrum" Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę (Empowering Children Founda- tion) Fundacja Dzieci w Nature Fundacja Dzieciom POMAGAJ Fundacja KiDs Fundacja Mlekiem Mamy Parent in the City Foundation Rodzice dla Klimatu Kraków Rodzice Publicznego Przedsz- kola nr 3 Niezapominajka w Świebodzicach Rodziny bez granic / Families with- out borders Society Polish Grannies Stowarzyszenie Rodzice Razem Portugal Associação de Pais da Escola Profº Francisco Sanches Associação de pais da Escola Se- cundária Braamcamp Freire ASSOCIAÇÃO DE PAIS DE FRADELOS Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação da EB1/JI da Garapoa Associação de Pais e Encarregados de Educação do Jardim de Infância Fonte Feto Associação Pais EB2/3 Celeirós Lisbon for Parents Parents for future Parents for Future Porto Parents For Future Portugal Parents for Future Portugal - Lisboa Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone School Green Clubs (SLSGC) Slovakia DocUnion NGO Mother center NEVEDKO Planet Lover Rodinné centrum Prešporkovo Rodinne centrum Racik Znepokojené matky South Africa Earthchild Project Earthlife Africa Woman of change Spain AMPA CEIP Maximiliano Gil Melián AMPA PLACIDO FLEITAS Madres por el Clima MADRES POR EL CLIMA CA- NARIAS Madres por el clima Región de Mur- cia Nais polo Clima Sweden Parents For Future Sweden Våra barns klimat #grandparentsforfuture Skarpnäck FFF Karlstad FFF Munkedal FridaysForFuture, Skövde Grandparents for Future Stock- holm Grandparentsforfuture grandparentsforfuture Piteå Klimatgruppen Österåker Parents For Future Norrtälje Parents For Future Umeå Parents For Future/Dalarna ParentsForFuture Karlskrona Parentsforfuture Stockholm ParentsForFuture Sunne The Researchers Desk Våra Barns klimat Huddinge Switzerland Genitori per il clima Grands-parents pour le climat / Kli- magrosseltern Schweiz Uganda Children's Climate Kibengo Youths Care Activists United Arab Emirates Warrior moms XR Grandparents and Elders United Kingdom Mothers rise up Parents For Future UK XR Families A Space 2 Grow Be The Future Bear Cubs Toddler Group Better Streets for Grove Park Big Dreams Little Footprints Boscastle School Association Bounds Green Sustainability group Branching Out Sabden Buttercup Learning
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Carolside Primary School Parent Council	Meanwood Valley Woodchips	Southwell mums	Climate Action Families
Chalford Greens	MindYourFootprint	St Julian's School Association	Climate Dads
Chapel Allerton Primary School Parent and Staff Association	Mini Millfielders	St Vincents Primary PTA	Climate Kids Club
Cheadle Climate Group	Mitcham Parents Network	St Werburghs Primary school Green Parents Group	Families For a Future
Chickpeas	Mothers Rise Up Scotland	Stepping Hill Antenatal Group December 2019	Families for a Livable Climate
Clean School Air	Mothers Rise Up West Midlands	Stonegate School PTA	Families for Climate
Climate Ready Schools	Mothership	Swansea Parents supporters of Youth Strike	Future Fighters
Coconut nursery	MothersRiseUp	The creative co-op	Highland Community School Parent Board of Directors
Coconut Nursery Parents	Mothers' Climate Action Network (Mothers CAN)	The Forge Eco Kids	Kat Kat Adventure
Corpus Christi School Parents' Association	Mums for Lungs	The Friends of Holymead Primary School	MAST PTSA Green Champions
Crouch End NCT Group 2015	Mums For Lungs E17	The Motherload	Miami Dade county council PTA
Dance Like a Mother CIC	Nature Fledglings	Tooting parents network	Mothers & Others For Clean Air
Dara Learning Group	NCT Gloucester Road 2017	Walters Way Families Association	Mothers Out Front- Westchester
East End Outside	NCT Leeds	Wellfield Infant PTA	Rivertowns
Eastfield infant and nursery, year 1 parents	New Hinksey School Association	West Green kids	Mother's together
Eco Action Families	Oldfield Eco Group	Widcombe Schools Green Team	Noah's Parents
Eco Colchester Parenting	Parent Carers Unite	Wild Leaf Play	Parents for Future Denver
Extinction Rebellion Hackney Family	Parents food group	Woking XR Families	Parents For Future Miami
FACE - Families Acting on Climate Emergency	Parents for Future Bedfordshire	XR Abingdon Parents and Carers	San Carlos mother's club
Fairlawn parents	Parents for Future Bristol and Bath	XR Families Haringey	Sunrise Kids NYC
Fireflies Forest School	Parents for Future Edinburgh	XR Families Leeds	The Lilies Project
Gavinburn Parent Council	Parents for Future London	XR South Devon Families	The Parents' Climate Community
Greenwich Sustainability Hub	Parents for Future Oxford		Tinker Tree Play/Care
HEART Community Group	Parents for future Scotland		Trinity Presbyterian Mother's Group
Helpfulkidz	Parents For Future Sunderland		Vote Like a Madre
Hillhead Primary Parent Council	Parents For Future SW London		Waterspirit
Islington Clean Air Parents	PFF South West London		Welcome To Earth
Kid's Make	Planet & People		
Knackered Mums Eco Club	Plastic Free Combe Down	United States	
Lake Street Nursery trustees	Rousham Road Green Parents	ClimateMama	
Little learners	Rowanbank Environmental Arts & Education	Elders Climate Action	Uruguay
Lockleaze Community Climate Action	Scarlet Class Trafalgar Infants Parents	Moms Clean Air Force	Parents for future Uruguay
Love the leaf	Sedgeberrow bumps and babies group	Mothers Out Front	
Marshside Primary School PFA	Sheffield Green Parents	Science Moms	Vietnam
	Small Actions	Talk Climate	Parent-Led Climate Vietnam
	Small Stories	Third Act	
	Society of Feminist Mothers	US Parents for Climate Action	Zimbabwe
		350Brooklyn Families	Manica Youth Assembly Trust
		All Nations Health Center	
		Arizona Climate Action Coalition	
		Belmont mother's club	

The *Oxford Magazine* is edited by

**Tim Horder
&
Ben Bollig**

The *Magazine* normally appears in Noughth, Second, Fifth and Eighth Weeks each Term. Submissions (preferably by e-mail to: tim.horder@dpag.ox.ac.uk, benjamin.bollig@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) should be received by the Wednesday of the previous week.

Literary Editor:
Jane Griffiths at Wadham

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Oxford Magazine

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*Subscriptions normally run from
September for a full academic year,
but can be started at any time.*

What is to be done?

George Monbiot on Disobedience

BARBARA HARRISS-WHITE

Wolfson college, hitherto one of Oxford's worst collegiate emitters of greenhouse gases, is currently in the throes of an ambitious project of repair and physical transformation that will reduce its emissions by about 80% within a year (not counting everyone's air travel). Despite the sufferings of students living in this construction site, the college has mobilised itself behind the idea of net zero carbon, even creating a new 'earth emergency research cluster' (EERC). In the run-up to COP26, George Monbiot, the noted environmental researcher and activist, accepted EERC's invitation to launch a year of learning and discussion.

In a half-packed auditorium, which passes for full to bursting these days - together with an attentive set of on-line listeners - Monbiot developed the theme '*Survival Requires Disobedience: Radical political movements are crucial to the defence of Life on Earth*'. This is a theme so hugely at variance with the daily round of lectures, tutorials and hall, that OM readers might wish to know more. So here goes.

He began by laying out the attributes of systems too complex for us to understand - be they in the living soil, the global financial system, Higher Education or the brain itself. Of their many attributes, including their emergent, adaptive, self-organising relations, a central property of complex systems (and systems of systems) is the capacity to absorb stress up to a point at which they flip, and would require much more effort to restore them to their previous equilibrium than that needed to move to an entirely new set of relations. He introduced a series of chilling examples, from the Amazon's forest and what the photographer Sebastiao Salgado has captured as its 'river in the sky' to the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC, driving the Gulf stream), to show how extreme physical events might multiply as tipping points are approached, and how such tipping points might cascade through the interlocked earth, water and air systems to create new relations in which much of the present animal and plant world would have no place.

While we know how to handle dysfunctions in simple linear systems (turn off the tap in the washbasin), and in complicated systems (sort out the ignition in your car), the only response to a complex of complex systems that is very probably moving towards tipping points is a drastic, and sudden reduction in its stressors. Since all this is now well established, Monbiot then turned to ask why rational people take no - or pathetically inadequate - action on the ecological crisis. Why is there no 'political will'?

After all, he argued, it is not that there is no historical precedent. To illustrate, he pointed to the astonishingly rapid transformation of the US economy after Pearl Harbour to a capitalist-command military industrial complex. One explanation for passivity is public ignorance (and the wilfully misleading role of the media). He did not condemn the many hands not raised in the educated audience when he asked how many of us knew about more than

one greenhouse gas, or the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere (or, later, when he asked how many felt they could define capitalism). Addressing other aspects of social inertia: denial, cognitive dissonance and distracting obsessions with trivia, he invoked Vasily Grossman's explanation for human behaviour in the face of totalitarian violence, in his book '*Life and Fate*' - that, even when threatened by death, we have an instinct for obedience that is more powerful than our instinct for survival. 'Obedience is a great human flaw'.

What is stressing the earth's systems is economic growth: an economy growing at 3% doubles in some 23 years and in 70 years will be 8 times its original size. In view of this elementary fact, Monbiot sees the disobedient mentality as one that questions economic growth, and questions those relying on the decoupling of growth from materials and energy; above all a mentality that recognises and names the culpability of capitalism - that concept which is taboo for the obedient. Following Karl Polanyi, Monbiot explained how capital commodifies land, labour and money, plunders them and moves on without a brake, enlarging its carbon footprint as it goes, creating obscene wealth and using people's own aspirations to reinforce the idea that there is no alternative to obedience.

Hence, he concludes, there is no alternative to disobedience. Over to us.

At this point the hybrid audience erupted with questions about what disobedience means in practice, to what ends would disobedience be mobilised, what form a new radical politics would take and what kind of careers make sense. Monbiot was guarded about any '-isms' that might replace capitalism but envisaged a society in which private sufficiency (no SUVs for example) co-exists with public luxury and plenty (ample public transport) and is able to halt the race to uninhabitability. While the technologies needed are known, this goal could only be reached by means of a varied political ecosystem of unprecedentedly active and disobedient social movements, developing through experiment, trial and error, to attain critical political thresholds.

'Join something'... 'Never try to act alone'.

Being alone in a critique risks failure, but here are four kinds of response.

Modifying Monbiot's argument.

Has there been a precedent? Monbiot ignored Covid, the public finance response to which had brought temporary hope to many environmentalists. It is one thing to cite the action of the federal government in war-time, as he did, but quite another to mobilise 196 bickering nation states

for collective action at the speed needed. Does this counsel of despair then delegitimise attempts at collective action? Could the rationing of the remaining atmospheric carbon space trigger a command economy or a collectively owned economy not subject to the destructive logic of capital?

Do we have an instinct for obedience? An instinct would be indifferent to culture, time and space. Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive Rebels* not only traces centuries of disobedience but shows how disobedience is the product of specific material-cultural conditions.

Can social quiescence be explained in other ways than obedience? Widespread private property-ownership means that potential rebels have more to lose. The deliberate construction of old age as an individuated and insecure condition, where the life-support of pensions depends on fund managers and finance capital, already serves as a powerful deterrent to revolutionary attacks on capital.

Contradictions of capitalism

Soviet Industrialisation wrought havoc on nature, but it is fossil fuelled capitalism that bestrides the world. This has serious implications for the question 'what is to be done?'. Qualifications and euphemisms (the private sector, business, growth) mask the institutions and dynamics of capitalism. When private property, the exploitation of labour for profit, accumulation and commodification penetrate not just the life world but also the state, then 'political will' and politics are refashioned in the interests of global capital. Public services, Monbiot's posited sphere of luxury, are the coal-face for on-going commodification. The public interest becomes nothing more than the sum of private interests. Outsourced, the state's institutional memory and democratic control atrophy.¹ These processes are far advanced in the UK, as elsewhere. Monbiot's ecosystem of social movements evidently has to refashion the state before it can transform society.

Alternatives to capitalism

Monbiot's writing is rich with alternative transformative ideas but, as Andre Gorz saw in the 1970s, without countervailing economic and political force behind them, counterhegemonic ideas are mired in the hypocrisy of recognising capitalism as the problem but having no solution but tweaking it. The IPCC report² in 2018 on the damage threatened by the 1.5 degree warming towards which we are rapidly hurtling called for radical transformations, far-reaching and unprecedented changes, but socialism appears to be just as taboo among the disobedient as capitalism is among the obedient. Monbiot's own seeming disinclination to address it (despite having signed the Eco-Socialist Alliance's manifesto (<https://socialistproject.ca/2021/10/ecosocialism-not-extinction/#more>)) appeared a case in point.

Modes of disobedience

The urgency of the ecological crisis compels Monbiot to call for protest, civil disobedience and civil rebellion on an expanded scale. The memory of the unprecedentedly massive Iraq War protests in mid-February 2003, completely

ignored by our political masters, suggests limits to scale alone. Monbiot emphasises the need for a diversity of objectives and tactics – through which political resilience can be expressed. But he did not discuss the limits to disobedience.

The latter question is central to Andreas Malm's book *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, which is not about what its title suggests but presents the case that the ineffectuality of pacifist, non-violent dissent leaves no alternative to strategically targeted violence. Arguing that the alleged historical successes of non-violent struggle have in fact depended on less-celebrated elements of violence, Malm thinks that targeted violence against fossil fuel infrastructure could shift public consciousness and political resolve. But would it? Would it not also harm the weakest members of society? Would it not be met with violent repression – abetted by the hostile media (which already refer to 'Insulate Britain' as 'eco-mobs')? Balagopal, Indian mathematician and great political activist, knew from experience that violence begets violence and that when it 'dominates society, justice and humanity are corrupted'.

We are left with no option but the rapid mobilisation of public awareness and a surge in public opinion greater than the pressures to conform and the force of media opposition, too big for political parties to contain.

Will fear of apocalyptic catastrophe frighten people and their governments into useful forms of politics? Are the mass of campaigning groups on course to develop a resilient political 'ecosystem' as Monbiot suggests or, without a unified coherent plan for the transformation needed, are they easy to divide and rule? Can the state be transformed in the way that is needed without a political party at the helm? Will the masses withdraw their consent to inertia unless massively polluting elites reduce their carbon footprints? Should academics lead the way in disobedience? Will disobedient academics join forces with disobedient journalists or shop stewards or engineers? What else is to be done? How? And who pays for it? Watch George Monbiot's lecture on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNYZm_6m7LM

¹An early exposition is Colin Leys' *Market Driven Politics* (London, Verso, 2003)

²<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr1.5/download/>

A trapped bee

Her buzzing woke us, wings against the window,
an open window which we opened wider
hoping the fresh air of a spring morning
bringing the faint scent of early blossom
would call her back to the garden, to her brood,
and spare us from having to pick her up
with stung fingers, but no, she would not go,
she went on beating herself against the pane,
deceived by transparency, the illusion of escape,
impossible freedoms; mistaking our ushering
for attack, she grew angry, frantic.

We took a glass and placed it over her, slid
a thin book under, and held her up to the light
like Victorian naturalists amazed at a new species,
ready with Indian ink and colour wash to record her:

a) *Compound eye*. b) *Corbiculum*. c) *Proboscis*.
d) *Basitarsus*.

The millennia we've shared! Allure of flowers,
winter sleeps, and summer's drowsy afternoons.
We take her to the garden, watch her fly away,
hear her droning fade into the dawn chorus.

Waiting for the taxi

At bedtime we'd leave our cases by the door
with tickets, passports and warm clothes,
for when the taxi came hours before
dawn to take us through deer-startled roads
to the airport, it would be cold as we
gave the driver a hand and took
a final look around, pretending to check
if we'd left lights on – but really to see
once more the things we'd sown,
trees we'd planted, watered, grown.

This spring we put the family photos
into boxes, one for each child, and there,
too, letters asking them to forgive us
for any hurt, and begging them to care
for each other, and saying we were glad
it was us who had to go, not one of them,
for then our hearts would have broken,
and when they hear the blackbird's song
it will be us sending them love, long
after the taxi's paid for and gone.

Free verse

Busker, sing a new song
atonal for discordant times,
let your plectrum be a shard,

fingerboard fretless,
your blind hands feel
for music on the strings.

Free us from the staggering
weight of centuries,
crush of volumes.

Scrawl on their vellum
and spineless dedications, fill
their foxed pages with staves.

Sing out something other.
Shock us.
Reword us.

Yes!
We will say,
Yes!

We'll sing along,
toss coins in your cup.

The Buddha in Hackney market

I will not take the fuck-you option,
walk out making my excuses, say I need space,
seek lonely beaches, empty quarters,
shun neighbours who row through thin partitions.
No, press 'down' for street level, here's my place;
I will sweep your pavements, pluck Coke cans
from sooty privet, fast-food cartons from gutters,
watch the rabbi tie his shoe lace.

The nymphs have not departed, they shiver
under bridges, by canals on needled tow-paths.
Like them I sell the only thing I have,
here in Hackney market I set out my stall,
(will'st thou try my pretty schmutter?)
here I'll find freedom or not at all,
where the Buddha holds a bunch of daffs and utters,
'Here or nowhere, Tony, now or never.'

TONY BRIGNULL

Tony Brignull read English at Kellogg College and St Edmund Hall, then gained an MA in Life Writing at KCL. He now divides his time between his homes in the Chilterns and on the island of Skiathos, Greece.

Quality at the Grass Roots

PETER OPPENHEIMER

Scarcely a month ago Chancellor Patten's well publicized solicitation of advice on the Vice-Chancellorship (*O.U. Gazette*, 30th September, 2021) amounted to a tacit admission that the University's management needs re-shaping – more bluntly, pruning – at the top. Likewise underpinning his appeal was recognition that Oxford's quality resides not in hierarchies and central direction, but in the grass roots. Not only the academic quality moreover, but, crucially, relevant managerial quality as well.

To-day's universal concern – the global crises of sustainability and climate change – strikingly illuminates the point. I shall here consider two contrasting documents. One, published by the Conference of Colleges on 21st May 2021, is a modest and informative 30-page Report, from its Sustainability Working Group, entitled Existing College Sustainability Initiatives. I say more about it later.

The other, formally launched around the same time (on 7th May), is the University's so-called Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS). A document with this title appeared first in a draft version on 18th November 2020 (Supplement [1] to *O.U. Gazette* No. 5293); and then, virtually unchanged, in final form on 24th March 2021 (Supplement [2] to *O.U. Gazette* No. 5307) – preceded by an on-line Staff Forum on 18th March after rubber-stamping by Council on 15th.

This elaborate choreography is not accompanied by remotely commensurate action. I need to repeat here the substance of my critique in *Oxford Magazine* No. 431, Noughth Week, Trinity Term 2021, "The Road to Academic Debasement". Evidently in the eyes of Wellington Square, sustainability is just one more pretext for consolidating and extending its dictatorial control over the University. To begin with, the claim that the ESS document is the outcome of a "University-wide consultation with staff and students on behalf of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee" is, to say the least, questionable. Doubtless a few e-mails floated hither and thither. The principal legitimate channel of democratic consultation at Oxford, however, happens to be the legally sovereign assembly of Congregation – which was conspicuously kept out of the picture from start to finish.

Secondly, the ESS was artfully aligned with other channels of central administrative assertion. There are, the document informs us, "three pillars of sustainability: social, economic and environmental. The University takes action on economic and social sustainability in other areas, such as access and participation, race equality and closing its gender pay gap." What a semantic distortion.

By extension therefore, and thirdly, environmental sustainability is henceforth to be "embed[ded] in the University's governance and decision-making" through the new 14-member Environmental Sustainability Sub-Committee of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, its functions to include "developing a system of annual reporting of carbon emissions and biodiversity impact...; establishing a policy to guide our use of carbon offsetting and biodiversity offsetting; and establishing the Oxford Sustainability Fund to fund the programme of action re-

quired to reach net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain by 2035".

The 15-year (2020-35) time horizon is then adorned with a few incoherent statistics. The forthcoming, obscurely sourced Oxford Sustainability Fund is supposed to lay out some £200 million over the period. This is presumably part of the aggregate £447 million "Outline Costs of Implementing the Strategy" tabulated as an appendix to the EES document. How much of this is expense occasioned specifically by the objective of net zero carbon, as opposed to necessary replacement of worn-out machinery or other maintenance, is anybody's guess.

Nor does it greatly matter. The truth is that, to set itself up as a self-sufficient generator of net zero carbon makes no more sense for "Oxford University" (however defined) than it does, say, for a postal district such as OX2 or London SW6. Such entities are at once too large, too small and too variegated to constitute meaningful decision-taking units. The University community should simply continue to take these matters in its stride, piecemeal and *ad hoc*, much like households – which indeed are gradually adjusting their travel habits, vehicles, power usage and sources (including home insulation, boilers and solar panels), diet, financial dispositions and so forth. Particular decisions and timings are subject to the price and availability of products and facilities, as well as qualified installation personnel – all of which depend in their turn on industrial capacities, on government policies and on types of education not obtainable at Oxford.

Very different is the approach of the Conference of Colleges. Its Report on Existing College Sustainability Initiatives (see above) shows first, and unsurprisingly, that every college in Oxford is acting on these matters. And secondly, that the scale and focus of action varies widely, depending on the pressures and opportunities confronting each institution and also, no doubt, on the skill and judgement of their management teams.

If there were an occasional prize for the top performer in this league, Wolfson College promises to be an outstanding contender. Its listed, partly 50-year-old buildings with aged gas boilers and extensive elevations of single glazing render it, in the words of Sir Tim Hitchens, its current President, "one of Oxford's worst emitters", having a twenty-year carbon footprint of 24,000 tons of CO₂. The Governing Body resolved in 2020 that decarbonisation be a top priority. It commissioned an energy audit and decarbonisation plan from a building services engineer, Bill Watts, Senior Partner of Max Fordham LLP. Less than twelve months later, in June 2021, the college announced an immediate project both to switch from gas boilers to electric heat pumps and to replace many of the existing glass panels with ultra-thin triple glazing, thereby eliminating by March 2022 (i.e. within nine months) 75% of the carbon emissions on its main estate. One-half of the cost is being met by a government grant of £5 million. The college further plans, subject to financial availabilities, that additional projects (including re-roofing, and also

battery storage of electricity) will lead it to achieve net zero carbon on its entire estate by no later than 2030.

The wider lessons of all this for University governance should not be ignored. Has Oxford anything to gain from the activities of a 14-member Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee of its notoriously dysfunctional Council? The

idea is ridiculous. Would Oxford benefit from the periodic input of somebody like Sir Tim Hitchens to a new-style Vice-Cancellarial Collective at the apex of the University's governance? Is the Pope Catholic? Chancellor Patten certainly is. One can only hope that he also has the courage to innovate.

Chinese Shapes

Vase

Ours
Is
A time
When we show
Objects we don't use.
We would need a chrysanthemum
Or goldfish for utility to trump artifice
And the shelf-bound shape to become
Itself. We could choose.
Meanwhile, how
Sublime
This
Vase!

Kite

So
Light,
It lit
Up the day
With flashes of sun
On its diamond of paper.
It lofted a green dragon on it with dreams of flight
And ribbons like trailing vapour.
Now its journey's done,
Who can say
Where it
Might
Go?

Fan

Can
You
Repay
Nature with
Art's flawed currency?
Here's a grassy water meadow
Where beneath the tears of an ancient willow a few
Black-headed brown-feathered geese go
Hissing: one, two, three,
Like a myth,
On a
Blue
Fan

Parasol

None
Stir
Outside
Till each cup
Of bud suddenly
Spills over with blossom. Foolish,
Isn't it, to yearn so for the Spring and to saunter
In the warm air, but to brandish
Our parasols: we
Put them up
To hide
The
Sun.

Lantern

A
Small
Lantern
Whose flame will
Flicker through a night
Of sleeplessness, reaching out to
Other sleepless flames like a heart of unusual
Eagerness (as from me to you!),
It won't stay alight
But it still
Can burn
All
Day.

JOHN FULLER

John Fuller is an Emeritus Fellow of Magdalen College, where he was formerly a Tutor in English. His latest publications are a new collection of poems, *Asleep and Awake* (Chatto, 2020) and his ninth novel, *Loser* (Shoestring, 2021).

Vice-Chancellors and their Pro-Vice-Chancellors: the Cambridge experience

G.R.EVANS

Both Oxford and Cambridge are in process of choosing their next Vice-Chancellors.¹ Oxford's Nominating Committee for the Vice-Chancellorship is elected by Congregation.² 'Prospective candidates who want to stand for election to the committee must be the resident holder of a teaching, research, or administrative post in the University or in any college, society, or Permanent Private Hall'.³ The Committee elected this summer has invited comment and suggestions as it settles to its work. If the process follows last precedent Congregation will need to approve the one name recommended by the committee.

Cambridge announced the appointment of its Advisory Committee for Nominations on 27 October.⁴ It includes external members of the Council and in its *Notice* the Council said it was still seeking 'one further external member who is, or was until recently, the Vice-Chancellor or equivalent of a university'. The only involvement of the Regent House in this nominating process is to approve the Grace eventually published, naming the Council's choice.

It must now be an urgent question whether these are satisfactory arrangements for selecting for these potentially seven-year appointments in a period of fast change in English higher education. In both universities the office has changed since the 1990s from a rotating part-time responsibility for a few years, normally passing from one Head of House to another, to a generously salaried full-time office to be held for up to seven years.⁵ A reason given in both cases was the belief that the job was now too much for a part-time short-term holder to carry. With the same declared intention of making it possible for a Vice-Chancellor to discharge the duties of the post both universities have gradually created Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios, six for Oxford, five for Cambridge. The Vice-Chancellors with Pro-Vice-Chancellors have evolved into 'senior leadership teams' in both universities.

A consequence has been a significant change in the understanding of what has become *de facto* a plural 'Vice-Chancellorship' in both universities. Both Oxford and Cambridge leave the powers of their Vice-Chancellors only loosely-defined in their Statutes and any rules governing the operations of such 'teams' go unmonitored. There are no recorded meetings of a constitutionally recognised or defined body, no agendas and no minutes of the working together of these 'teams'.⁶ Constitutional questions arise from these relatively new developments which ought, surely, to be open to review before the next two seven-year terms begin.

What follows explores what has been happening in Cambridge, where the record of *Reports* and *Discussions*, all published in the *Reporter*, makes it possible to trace it in some detail, something that is much less easy in Oxford's case.

Cambridge's full-time salaried seven-year Vice-Chancellors

The new-style Vice-Chancellorship has tended to separate both Vice-Chancellors from the informal daily intercourse with the life of the University their predecessors enjoyed, and thrown them the more closely upon their Pro-Vice-Chancellors. A Vice-Chancellor plucked from among familiar colleagues in an environment whose constitution is well understood, and conscious that he will soon be back among his colleagues, is likely to look upon his task rather differently from one who is appointed from outside and expects to move away thereafter. Those entering the new-style full-time Vice-Chancellorship have understandably defined the role afresh for themselves as they saw it, in the expectation that they will be able to make a lasting mark.

Accepting the proposal of its Wass Syndicate,⁷ Cambridge tried that experiment rather cautiously. When it introduced its new-style Vice-Chancellorship from 1992 David Williams, the old-style Vice-Chancellor from 1989, continued in the new-style office till 1996, until he had completed the permitted seven years. The University scarcely noticed the difference. Alec Broers, Master of Churchill College (1990-6), succeeded Williams from 1996-2003 but he began with a personal mission, declared on his first day, to strengthen Cambridge's links with industry.

However, he found himself frustrated by the University's democratic governance. 'The decisions of the Council can be questioned and a ballot called by a group of unelected members half the size of the elected Council', he complained in his sixth Annual Address as Cambridge's Vice-Chancellor in October 2002. He proposed 'that the Vice-Chancellor become the Principal Academic and Administrative Officer of the University' because 'there must be someone to head an organization and in universities this is generally the Vice-Chancellor or her or his namesake'.⁸ In Discussion of the ensuing unsuccessful governance-change proposals, Stephen Cowley put memorably the concern that that would make the Vice-Chancellor a Chief Executive. 'If it looks like a duck, squawks like a duck, and walks like a duck, it is a duck'.⁹ Cambridge's Statute C,III,3 still says only that 'the Vice-Chancellor shall enjoy the customary rights and perform the customary duties of the office' and 'shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed by Statute or Ordinance'. Some of these powers and duties are set out variously in Special Ordinances and Ordinances but they do not add up to the powers of a Chief Executive.

When Alison Richards gave her inaugural Address on coming into office from Yale in 2003 she set out her own view of 'the role of the Vice-Chancellor' at some length. She asked what were her 'tasks' as she 'put on the cassock of the Vice-Chancellor'. In her view it involved significant leadership:

*'it is the Vice-Chancellor's responsibility to ensure that intelligently conceived planning processes are in place and moving forward throughout the University, informing the direction of the University as a whole even as they chart the course of its many parts.'*¹⁰

Leszek Borysiewicz was not new to Cambridge, having spent part of his career as a Fellow of Wolfson. He had also recently been up to date with trends in English higher education as Deputy Rector of Imperial College, London. Coming into office in 2010, he simply said that he was 'excited by the challenges and yet awed by the responsibility of this position'.¹¹ He proved to be a workmanlike Vice-Chancellor.

The next newcomer, arriving with a Cambridge PhD but a career spent in Canada, so without recent experience of the University, or indeed of higher education in England was Stephen Toope. In his own inaugural Address in 2017, Stephen Toope, said:

*'Upon hearing that I had been offered the post, the most common response among people who know me was: "Wow!" This, to be honest, was also my own reaction: Wow!'*¹²

He found that a Vice-Chancellorship is not an easy job to succeed in when some of his well-meant initiatives proved controversial. There had been a series of resignations elsewhere. In 2012 the Vice-Chancellor of Newport resigned.¹³ On 27 November 2006 the *Guardian* announced that Sussex's Vice-Chancellor was to 'step down', in the wake of 'controversial plans to close the university's respected chemistry department'.¹⁴ In 2013 there was a student petition calling for the Vice-Chancellor of Sussex to 'resign immediately' when the Office of the Independent Adjudicator upheld a complaint over the suspension of five students.¹⁵ In February 2019 the Office for Students 'initiated a formal investigation into matters at De Montfort University' and 'found weaknesses and failings in the university's management and governance arrangements', as it announced in July 2019.¹⁶ The then Vice-Chancellor resigned.¹⁷

In September 2021, Stephen Toope announced his intention to resign at the end of the following academic year, after only five years in the post, giving personal reasons,¹⁸ though the media were quick to list alleged mistakes, for the media holds the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge personally responsible for success and failure alike. A series of uncomfortable moments on his watch were laid at his door by *The Times*. 'His tenure has been marked by a series of conflicts', it said, listing them.¹⁹

Cambridge experiments with Pro-Vice-Chancellors

The philosopher T.J. Smiley warned in a speech during Cambridge's Discussion of its *Wass Report* in 1989 that its proposals would mean that 'the real power will lie' with an 'informal group of senior members with whom the Vice-Chancellor can share some of the burdens of office'.²⁰

The nature of that relationship was not fully thought through at first in Cambridge when the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors began. This was largely an extension of the Deputy Vice-Chancellorships Cambridge already had, and still retains, who were simply appointed by the Vice-Chancellor as his deputies, mainly to chair com-

mittees and preside at Discussions.²¹ These are not substantive offices, like the Pro-Vice-Chancellorships, which now have their place as such in the Statutes.²²

Cambridge's Council appoints a Nominating Committee²³ for the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, consisting mainly of itself with two members of the General Board. The Regent House does not Grace its decisions.²⁴ Oxford preferred to extend its existing category of 'deputies', already called Pro-Vice-Chancellors. The Oxford Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolios may be – and recently several have been – external appointments. Oxford's Statute IX, 15-6 allows Council to design the procedures for their appointment and at present they are 'appointed by the Vice-Chancellor subject to the approval of Council' and have 'special responsibility for designated functions as agreed by Council on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor'.²⁵

The Cambridge Pro-Vice-Chancellors 'report to the Council through the Vice-Chancellor' and he may 'determine' some of their duties.²⁶ A difference from Oxford was that it was early decided that the Pro-Vice-Chancellors were to be (and still are) 'appointed from inside the University' and keep their underlying offices while giving 80% of their time to this additional Office.²⁷

In his Annual Address in October 1997 Alec Broers commented on the two Pro-Vice-Chancellors Cambridge had appointed and the 'responsibilities' he had 'wished upon them'.²⁸ This was more of a job-share than an allocation of specified responsibilities, for these first Cambridge Pro-Vice-Chancellors and their immediate successors had as yet no portfolios.²⁹ Nevertheless, it was not long before the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors were described as the 'senior management team' of the University. A *Report* of 2001 on the *Unified Administrative Service* suggested that that 'team' was 'still under strength and that its capacity can and should be enhanced by the appointment of one or two more additional Pro-Vice-Chancellors'.³⁰

The case was pressed in the course of the arguments for governance change which followed the CAPSA disaster over the University's accounting system.³¹ *University governance: a consultation paper* (published on 6 February, 2002) proposed that the Vice-Chancellor 'would be supported by a team of Pro-Vice-Chancellors' who would have portfolios, so as to 'serve in defined areas'.³² In a heated Discussion on 9 July, 2002, Dr. De Lacey foresaw 'on top of shiny new Directors of This That and The Other, Academic and Administrative Secretaries,' 'as many as five new assistants':

*'in the person of Pro-Vice-Chancellors; all of these with all the paraphernalia of their own individual secretariats. And just how much are these new amateur administrators going to benefit the University, in what little time they have to spare from the prime activity of propping each other up?'*³³

Nevertheless, the Regent House approved their creation on a ballot in January 2003.³⁴

In 2003, following a *Report of the Council on the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors in April the previous nomination by the Vice-Chancellor* was replaced by the present nominating committee.³⁵ The stipends of Pro-Vice-Chancellors were the subject of a *Report* in July 2003.³⁶ A renewable three-year period of office was retained but it was now agreed that the maximum period of service for

any one Pro-Vice-Chancellor was to be six years (eight in 'exceptional circumstances').

The incoming new Vice-Chancellor, Alison Richard, was consulted and a Notice was published in the *Reporter* in July 2003 to explain that now 'the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellors will be to drive strategy and policy development' and 'lead activity' or 'help ensure that it goes forward under other academic leadership'. Portfolios were 'likely to evolve over time, in response to changing needs and priorities' but for now 'with advice from the Vice-Chancellor-elect' portfolios had been identified, and a Notice was promised in Michaelmas Term inviting 'expressions of interest'.³⁷

The Pro-Vice-Chancellors continued to see themselves as a 'team'. It was proposed in April 2014 that though it:

*'would not be appropriate to establish a separate office of Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the title of Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor should be conferred on one of those appointed to the office, in recognition of that individual's responsibility for leading and coordinating the work of the team of Pro-Vice-Chancellors.'*³⁸

With three Pro-Vice-Chancellors due to be replaced in 2015 and 2016 a Notice appeared in the *Reporter* of 1 October, 2014, with a note on 'the general role of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors' which was 'to take forward strategy and policy development and to support the Vice-Chancellor in providing institutional leadership to the University, particularly in their areas of responsibility'. The portfolios were shuffled from time to time as perceived needs changed. There were more 'areas of responsibility' than could be covered by a mere five so there would be 'discussions with those appointed to the Pro-Vice-Chancellorships, taking into account their interests, expertise, and overall workload'. This made it desirable that members of the 'team' should be 'flexible in their approach and, under the leadership of the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor' able to 'adapt as priorities arise and strategic priorities evolve'.

Cambridge's *Reporter* of 13 October 2021 included a Notice announcing a call for a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) to lead 'major initiatives' and speak for the University to:

*'ensure that Cambridge's voice is heard in matters relating to learning and teaching at higher education institutions, by overseeing the University's response to initiatives and consultations led by the Office for Students and by engaging with relevant government departments.'*³⁹

The operation of 'team' Vice-Chancellors

This evolution of the role of Cambridge's Pro-Vice-Chancellors leaves their constitutional relationship to the Vice-Chancellor less than clear. As Stephen Toope has found, the Vice-Chancellor still seems to carry the blame when things go wrong, even though six Pro-Vice-Chancellors are intended to carry much of his burden, for under the statutes, 'the Pro-Vice-Chancellors shall report to the Council through the Vice-Chancellor'.⁴⁰ They are still in some sense acting as extensions of his office.

The Council and its committees carrying the University's executive responsibility are answerable to the Regent House but this Vice-Chancellor-plus in its 'senior leadership team' appears not to be fully under Regent House

control. Initiatives have been launched without consulting it. One episode of note was Cambridge's planned collaboration with the United Arab Emirates announced in July 2021 which caused sufficient controversy to prompt a pause for further thought. The *Guardian* spoke of a 'Faustian pact'.⁴¹

In its *Twenty-Sixth Report* published on 20 October the Board of Scrutiny was not content with the statement posted on the University website on 4 August which had stated that:

'we will be reflecting over the next few months before further evaluating our long term options with our partners and with the University Community.'

The Board was 'doubtful about the value of such opaque statements as a means of informing the University about University business'.⁴² It also questioned 'the rigour and timeliness of the internal scrutiny processes through the Committee structure and the extent of reporting to the Council and General Board'.⁴³

The Board includes among its *Recommendations* this year, published on 20 October:

*'that the Council takes steps to ensure that major systems (and other) transformation programmes ...are effectively resourced, monitored and sponsored on an on-going basis. This sponsorship will potentially need to be immune to the turnover of senior officers viz. Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellors.'*⁴⁴

¹In Oxford a Nominating Committee is variously appointed, including members representing different elements of the University, Conference of Colleges, the Academic Divisions and Congregation, as well as members appointed by Council, but it is Congregation that approves their eventual nomination (Statute IX,8 (1)). In Cambridge too the Regent House approves the appointment of an individual provided to it (on the nomination of the Council) (Statute C,III,1).

²<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/event/nominating-committee-for-the-vice-chancellorship/>

³<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/event/nominating-committee-for-the-vice-chancellorship/>

⁴The Council has appointed a committee to advise it on the choice of a person to be nominated for appointment to the office of Vice-Chancellor from 1 October 2022, in accordance with Regulation 1 of the Special Regulations for the Vice-Chancellor' (Statutes and Ordinances, p. 695), *Reporter*, 27 October.

⁵Cambridge's first such appointment began as President of Wolfson and part-time Vice-Chancellor from 1989-1992 and continued as the first full-time new-style Vice-Chancellor until 1997. His successor (1996-2003) was also a Head of House. But in both universities their nominating committees have since put forward for the new-style Vice-Chancellorship a candidate who arrived from recent experience elsewhere.

⁶*Oxford Magazine*, No. 407, 0th Week, TT 2019.

⁷*Report of the Syndicate appointed to consider the government of the University (Reporter 1988-9)*

⁸<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5897/19.html>

⁹<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5898/19.html>

¹⁰*Reporter*, 7 October, 2003.

¹¹*Reporter*, 6 October, 2010.

¹²<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2017-18/weekly/6478/section8.shtml#heading2-26>

¹³<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/cn/news/newport-vice-chancellor-to-step-down/419848.article>

¹⁴<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2006/nov/27/highereducation.careers>

¹⁵<https://www.change.org/p/university-of-sussex-the-vice-chancellor-must-resign-immediately>

¹⁶<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/de-montfort-university/>

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jul/01/university-vice-chancellor-dominic-shellard-payoff-resigning-de-montfort>; <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/de-montfort-confirms-departure-v-c-dominic-shellard>

¹⁸<https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/statement-about-the-vice-chancellor>

¹⁹<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cambridge-vice-chancellor-in-free-speech-row-steps-down-w2ft8z2gf>

²⁰Reporter, 1 December, 1989.

²¹Statute C, III, 7.

²²Statute C, III, 15-7

²³Constituted by Ordinance.

²⁴Ordinances, p. 696.

²⁵Council Regulations 21 of 2002, 10-11.

²⁶Statute C, III, 15-7.

²⁷<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5873/5.html>

²⁸<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/1997-98/weekly/5714/15.html>

²⁹Notice, Reporter 18 February, 1998. The Council give notice that, on the nomination of the Vice-Chancellor, they have made the following appointments to the office of Pro-Vice-Chancellor which became vacant on the retirement of Sir David Harrison.

³⁰<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2000-01/weekly/5842/19.html>

³¹Reporter, 2 November, 2001, and <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/capsa-report>

³²<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5873/5.html>

³³<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2001-02/weekly/5893/19.html>

³⁴<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5912/11.html> and https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5912/fly_sheets.pdf

³⁵<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5921/21.html>, Grace of 26 February 2003.

³⁶<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5931/16.html>

³⁷<https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2002-03/weekly/5933/10.html>

³⁸Reporter, 24 April, 2014, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2013-14/weekly/6344/section7.shtml#heading2-21>.

³⁹Reporter, 13 October, 2021.

⁴⁰Statute C, III, 15.

⁴¹<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jul/07/cambridge-university-accused-of-faustian-pact-in-planned-400m-deal-with-uae>

⁴²Reporter, 20 October.

⁴³Reporter, 20 October.

REVIEWS

A Spectrum of Neo-nationalism

JA Douglass, 2021, *'Neo-nationalism and Universities: Populists, Autocrats, and the Future of Higher Education'* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, p/bk)



Douglass (Berkeley) explores with the aid of ten contributors of various chapters the concept of 'neo-nationalism' as 'the rise, and in some cases revival, of extreme right-wing movements in key areas of the world' and the impact upon universities by way of 'anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric, economic protectionism, constraints on civil liberties, attacks on critics, denial of science related to climate change and the environment, and the emergence and empowerment of demagogues and autocrats'. Note the use of the word 'extreme' as qualifying 'right-wing'.

The 'key areas' are deemed to include (fair enough?) Hungary, Poland, Turkey, China, Hong Kong, Russia, and Brazil; but perhaps this collective of anxious academics are rather stretching credulity when we also find included Singapore, Trump's America, Brexit Britain, and the EU generally? The selection of case-studies, of course, reflects the fact that this endless supply of books on the alleged crisis of the wickedly neoliberal university is almost entirely conjured up by lefty academics. Thus, the book is marred by reading as a prolonged exposure to *The Guardian* at its most hysterical and hectoring.

A helpful conceptual scale is provided on p26 – 'A Spectrum of Neo-nationalism' stretches from 'Nascent Populist Movements' via 'Populist Political Parties' and 'Nationalist Leaning Governments' shading into 'Illiberal Democracies' before ending up as 'Authoritarian Regimes'. And the 'Impact on Universities' of each stage of the spectrum is set out in Figure 2.2 – from symptoms such as 'Doubt about the Value of Higher Education' (so public spending on HE is beyond question in terms of whether the taxpayer's £s and \$s and €s just might be better value if spent on, say, FE or primary schools?) via 'Battles over Freedom of Speech' and 'Threaten[ed] Reductions in Funding' (or even any reallocation of public spending on education?) to the 'Firing of Academics' and ultimately the 'Arrest of Academics for Sedition'.

What is then missing, however, is any attempt to plot precisely the dozen or so

various 'key areas' covered onto this neo-nationalist spectrum, indicating the exact symptoms of neo-nationalist progression along the spectrum that each 'key area' is supposedly at present displaying. The conceptual analysis and framework provided in the early chapters does not seem to have been properly digested by all of the many contributors to later chapters, at least in terms of guiding them as a template for discussion of key area X or Y.

So, turning especially to the chapters on Britain ('The Mystery of Brexit: Tumult and Fatigue in British Higher Education') and on the EU ('Neo-nationalism in the European Union and [the Impact upon its?] Universities') perhaps we can plot just where Britain under its presumably 'extreme' Tory Government and the EU under its presumably 'extreme' and 'right-wing' Brussels Bureaucracy are on the neo-nationalism spectrum as well as work out precisely how adverse the impact of neo-nationalism has been on their universities? – and even also calculate the trajectory faced by universities and academics in these two benighted 'key areas'?

The EU chapter turns out not to be about the EU as a political would-be superstate that (horror?) might one day decide Brussels should have 'competency' over universities instead of the nation state but about the growth of populist parties in various EU countries (indeed, 'there is no universal trend towards nationalism within the European Union' – which presumably means the EU Commission and the EU Parliament). So, 'How Are Universities Affected?' – seemingly not much, other than in 'the periphery of the EU' (which, one assumes, is anyway covered in the chapter on Hungary and Poland – but in fact it also covers Brexit Britain as now (post-Brexit) rather more than 'on the periphery' but still a 'sobering example' whose universities are declared to be 'more at risk' (of what is not entirely clear), although their counterparts in The Netherlands and Denmark are also said to be 'vulnerable' (to what exactly?) as their governments dare just to question the vfm of HE...). All in all it is hard to see quite what this 'EU' chapter adds, with its confused analysis and unnecessary hype, to the chapter on Hungary and Poland – and just why it is included in a book about 'extreme right-wing movements' that engender and ultimately impose neo-nationalism.

As for Britain, it has 'embraced a particular form of neo-nationalism' (as, one assumes from the earlier definition, mean-

ing some socio-political process driven by 'extreme right-wing' thinking) and seemingly because a majority in the 2016 Brexit referendum had the temerity to vote to exit the EU and thus now 'the post-Brexit world poses a major threat to the health of the UK university sector'. The usual tired and trite Remainer analysis of the causes of the Brexit vote is duly trotted out – a vote that 'left the UK higher education community reeling' (well quite a lot of it, admittedly) as 'university leaders looked on with horror' at the Brave New World that awaited them (inter alia 'The Threat to Research' and 'The Threat to Participation in Erasmus+'). The chapter rather peters out after the anti-Brexit rant and, again as with the EU chapter, leaves one sceptical about the inclusion of Britain in what might have been a significant book if the contributions of certain of its many authors had been sent to *The Guardian* rather than to The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Britain is presumably meant to be somewhere on the left-hand side of the p26 spectrum (harbouring 'Nascent Political Parties' or even actually having 'Populist Political Parties' – UKIP and the Conservative Party? – and shading towards 'Nationalist Leaning Governments' – the May and now the Boris regimes?) – but it is hard to identify just what symptoms of neo-nationalism expected at each such stage (p31) are being displayed. Other than an entirely reasonable 'Doubt about the Value of Higher Education' (at least in terms of taxpayer vfm and graduate employment prospects in relation to fee debt) and shading into a situation where the media mutterings around the Boris Government perhaps suggest that the regime may yet 'Threaten Reductions in Funding' – albeit not necessarily for tertiary education overall if FE at last gets much-needed and well-deserved increased funding, even at the expense of less for HE.

Anyway, happily, we seem a long way off 'Restrictions on Travel for Academics' or an 'Internet Communication Firewall' as the heavy end of neo-nationalism's potential impact on universities, which this Curate's Egg of a book does justifiably and usefully identify as regrettably all too live issues in certain 'key areas' of global HE.

DAVID PALFREYMAN

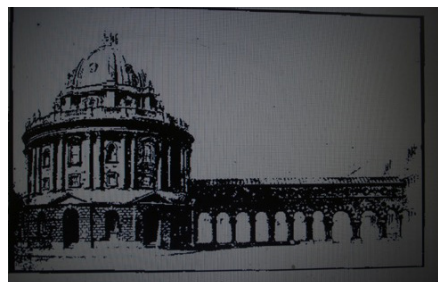
David Palfreyman is a Member of the OfS Board but writes in a purely personal capacity.

Psychogeographical Oxford

Patrick McGuinness, *Real Oxford* (Seren, 2021) £9.99



When I was a don some Midlands visitors to my room, which had a view of the spire of St Mary the Virgin, said, ‘We must be getting back to the real world.’ Me: ‘What do you mean? *This is the real world.*’ Truth is though that there are a lot of real worlds out there, all competing with each other. And unreal worlds compete, as the real world is subjectively transformed. What is it Eliot says in *The Waste Land*, considering a place transformed by the fog and overlain with Dantesque visions? ‘Unreal city’. And then there are ghostly worlds, of places elided by developments, and other ghostly worlds, cities dreamt of but not realised. These are treated in Howard Colvin’s *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983). Just think, if Hawksmoor had had his wicked way the Brasenose College High Street front would be a baroque effort, or later Soane’s neo-classical concoction might have appeared. Which idiot wanted to construct a neo-Byzantine bridge between the Radcliffe Camera and the Bodleian Library? He shouldn’t have entertained the idea for more than a micro-second. It doesn’t make it to Howard Colvin’s study.



Benjamin Woodward. Proposed neo-Byzantine bridge joining the Radcliffe Camera to the Bodleian Library.

Patrick McGuinness looks at Oxford away from the tourist cliché, not covered by conventional guide-books. Perhaps the cover should not be a picture of the iconic Radcliffe Camera but the Ship of Fools mural in Westbury Crescent (Rose Hill), or the alternative Bridge of Sighs in Templar Square, Cowley.



Ship of Fools mural, Westbury Crescent, Rose Hill.



Bridge at Templar Square. An up-dated Byron’s Childe Harold might read: ‘I stood in Cowley on the Bridge of Sighs, / A car park and a Wilko on each hand.’

This book is one of a series that covers other ‘real’ cities. Even people who think they know Oxford inside-out will find things in McGuinness they did not know. It continues a tradition which Will Self has made prominent in his *Psychogeography* (2007, illustrated by Ralph Steadman), of discovering random elements while walking about. I suppose the old word for the person doing this is flâneur, although McGuinness’ wanderings, mostly in the present tense, are slightly more purposeful than traditional flâneurism. He has good eye and a good ear, and brings many bits and pieces to life, some as little poems, but I think a more satisfactory medium would be body-cam filming in real time (whatever that is) with audio commentary. Likewise this review would be better as a video, provided I did not block the views and wave my arms around. There are pale black and white photographs which remind me of the lack-lustre illustrations to the psychogeographer W.G. Sebald’s books. There’s more of Hopkins’s ‘base and brackish skirt’ than most books on Oxford.

McGuinness begins down at the Station, where straightaway a ghostly Oxford manifests itself, the Rewley Road station, transformed into a tyre depot, where I got tires for my Riley in about 1964, the spinning wheels lit by a trembling stroboscopic light as they were balanced. It was an iron-framed building like the Crystal Palace and, when the Saïd Business School was erected on the site, it was moved out to the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre at Quainton, as ‘a pristinely-embalmed corpse.’ Museumification tends to have that effect.



Rewley Road Station in 1914. ‘But give me still, to stir imagination/ The chiaroscuro of the railway station.’ (W.H. Auden, ‘Letter to Lord Byron’).

There are lots of ghostly bits in *Real Oxford*, and we all have our own. I recall the splendid neo-Gothic façade of Grimby Hughes on Cornmarket, and the old Drill Hall where the St Cross Law Library now is.



Grimby Hughes on Cornmarket Street, and two doors down the Clarendon Hotel. Could the lorry labelled ‘Radiators’ belong to the factory in Bainton Road (closed 2001)?

Just down the street from Grimby Hughes was St Martin’s, Carfax, demolished in 1896 and earlier than that the Conduit, now in Newnham Courtenay Park. And also nearby was the Clarendon Hotel, demolished in 1954. It’s before my time, but in *The Strings are False* (1965) Louis MacNeice remembers how in the ‘twenties he ‘deplored the existence of the absurd’ Butterfield Grove building at Merton, pusillanimously ‘chastened’ (Pevsner’s word) in 1930, to make it look like a suburban pub.



William Butterfield, The Grove Building, Merton College (Henry Taunt, 1885).

I was fortunate enough to recall Binsey Poplars, immortalised by Hopkins, in their second-generation state – illustrated in my ‘Will Machines Be Like Me?’ (Ox-

ford Magazine, No. 422). Incidentally, *pace* McGuinness, I don't see Binsey Poplars as a war poem, even though it was published (posthumously) in 1918. I should have thought Edward Thomas's extraordinarily moving 'As the team's head brass' was more a war poem, explicitly connected with a fallen tree.

One had a strong sense of the antiquity of buried Oxford when the foundations were being dug for Westgate Centre, and the public was allowed to view it. Somewhere there in 1961 a disused Victorian schoolroom languished, where Playhouse sets went to die, and where I and some friends constructed a set for *Camino Real* at the Playhouse. Nearby was Paradise Square, absolutely delightful, built from 1838 onwards, but now lost. Had it survived the houses there would now be unaffordable except for oligarchs. I feel guilty that for a time I lived in Tennyson Lodge, built on the ruin of Paradise Square.



Paradise Square. Now lost. On the left is George Edmund Street's St Ebbe's Rectory, which has survived.



Paradise Square Houses. Early nineteenth-century. They would be oligarch material if they had survived.



Geodesic dome for the multi-storey car park in St. Ebbe's (1972). Now gone. Somebody had been reading Buckminster Fuller. Pevsner does not mention it.

I suppose no one now remembers the avant-garde geodesic dome for the multi-storey car park in St Ebbe's, as remote now, to use a phrase from Louis MacNeice's *Autumn Sequel* (1953), as 'a bronze wheel from Agamemnon's chariot.'

We all have our memories of pubs, cafés and bookshops long gone, and McGuinness has his. It always produces a pang to see what was the Thornton's Bookshop in Broad Street transmogrified into a café, and generations yet unborn will have to be informed about Boswell's and Gill's the ironmonger's, where you could buy ox-yokes, candle-moulds and devices for force-feeding geese. I remember the Cadena Café in Cornmarket. There was Fuller's tea-room on Cornmarket, and we crammed into Kemp's on Broad Street every morning to drink disgusting coffee.

It's now ancient history, but in *Michaelmas Term* in St Bride's Philip Larkin records a girl in the coffee shop in Elliston and Cavell's delivering a put-down line to an undergraduate trying to pick her up, descending on him 'like three drops of water from an icicle' and sending him 'scuttling incontinently away.' The Café de Paris in Alfred Street we patronised so often that we knew the exact place where the scratch was on the record of Vivaldi's *The Seasons*. The Cantina on Queen Street, with a delectable dessert trolley, was a sign that British eating-out was on the way up. Who remembers the Taj Mahal on Turl Street? Excellent Indian cuisine.

The Turl Cash Bookshop was a delightfully chaotic treasure house, and sometimes it had 'all you can carry for £1' sales. It now sells chi-chi stuff. McGuinness remembers (but does not name) Waterfield's, the gigantic bookshop on Park End Street – now gone. Whole streets have gone. I used to live in a beautiful early nineteenth-century house with an iron balcony in Isis Street, overlooking the Thames near Folly Bridge. All gone, street and houses and all.



Folly Bridge, with houses in Isis Street beyond the bridge on the right. The Salter's Office was designed by Stephen Salter, who also designed Lloyd's Bank at Carfax.

I have to ration myself on sentences beginning with 'when I' otherwise I shall start to sound like those codgers Tim Hilton met when he was doing research for his biography of Ruskin on the Isle of Wight, and everyone of them began every sentence with 'when I'.

McGuinness does not confine himself to places. There are personalities, such as the Inkling Hugo Dyson, John Wain, Olive Gibbs and others. Hugo Dyson taught McGuinness's father, but I had the privilege of knowing him. I have this image of driving him up towards Boars Hill in the Morris 8, and near the top he broke into Vesta Victoria's music-hall song: 'My lodger is a nice young man.' You can hear it on the internet – where it is 'Our lodger's such a nice young man.' He was a man of letters in *Darling*: 'Kissed on the lips twenty times by Julie Christie. It's never too late to fall.' There is a clip of him in the film to be seen on the internet – although he is a pale shadow of himself there. Like the aristocrats in Henry James's 'The Real Thing' (1892) he was unable to play himself.

I had the privilege of knowing John Wain too. Once we canoed up the canal from Worcester College to Wain Towers in Wolvercote, and as we reached the radiator works he said, 'This journey is an allegory of Oxford; the chaps working here keep the other chaps further up the canal in comfort.' This theme surfaces quite often in *Real Oxford*, and it appears in Betjeman's *An Oxford University Chest* (1938), where the industrial Oxford was Motopolis. The canal and river feature often in alternative Oxford through the decades. Auden used to walk by the gas-works to encounter reality. I agree with McGuinness that this was not an affectation; he genuinely liked industrial scenes. See his 'Letter to Lord Byron': 'Clearer than Scafell Pike, my heart has stamped on/ The view from Birmingham to Wolverhampton'. His contemporary Louis MacNeice records a poem trouvé in *The Strings Are False*:

'In the summer of 1927, when Graham [Shepherd] and I shared a canoe, instead of going up the Cherwell as was the custom, we used to paddle along the evil-smelling canal through the slums or up the Isis past the gas-drums. One May morning we were on this stretch of the Isis watching a drag onfly among the cow-parsley and shards on the bank when a goods train came over the railway bridge and we made a chant out of the names on the trucks – Hickleton, Hickleton, Hickleton, Lunt, Hickleton, Longbotham. This incantation of names at once became vastly symbolic – symbolic of an idle world of oily sunlit water and willows and willows' reflections and, mingled with the idleness, a sense of things worn out, scrap-iron and refuse, the shadow of the gas-drum, this England. Hickleton Hickleton Hickleton – the long train clanked and rumbled as if it had endless time to reach wherever it was going. The placid dotage of a great industrial country.'

This is very much the kind of thing McGuinness is after. Not that MacNeice neglected poetry with a big P altogether – he would 'spend hours in "Mesopotamia" devising phrases for the skeining of water in the little weir and waterfalls.' I wonder if modern undergraduates have any idea where Mesopotamia is – I don't mean the one in the Middle East.

A classic work in his genre of the other Oxford is James Elroy Flecker's 'Oxford Canal'. He was an aesthete, but like many aesthetes he had a sharp eye for what ordinary people miss. It's a pity McGuinness does not mention it – mind you Christopher Hibbert's *The Encyclopedia of Oxford* (1988) does not mention it either. It does in a brief space what McGuinness is after at more length. Flecker was not interested in just Samarkand:

*'When you have wearied of the valiant
spires of this County Town,
Of its wide white streets and glistening
museums, and black monastic walls,*

*Of its red motors and lumbering trains, and
self-sufficient people,
I will take you walking with me to a place you
have not seen –
Half town and half country – the land of
the Canal.
It is dearer to me than the antique town: I love
it more than the rounded hills:
Straightest, sublimest of rivers is the
long Canal.
I have observed great storms and trembled: I
have wept for fear of the dark.
But nothing makes me so afraid as the clear
water of this idle canal on a summer's noon.
Do you see the great telegraph poles down in
the water,
how every wire is distinct?
If a body fell into the canal it would rest
entangled in those wires for ever, between
earth and air.
For the water is as deep as the stars are high.*

*One day I was thinking how if a man fell from
that lofty pole
He would rush through the water toward me
till his image was scattered by his splash,
When suddenly a train rushed by: the brazen
dome of the engine flashed:
the long white carriages roared;
The sun veiled himself for a moment, and the
signals loomed in fog;
A savage woman screamed at me from a
barge: little children began to cry;
The untidy landscape rose to life: a
sawmill started;
A cart rattled down to the wharf, and
workmen clanged over the iron footbridge;
A beautiful old man nodded from the first
story window of a square red house,
And a pretty girl came out to hang up clothes
in a small delightful garden.
O strange motion in the suburb of a county
town: slow regular movement of the dance
of death!
Men and not phantoms are these that move
in light.
Forgotten they live, and forgotten die.'*

Not entirely forgotten though, because they are captured in the poem, and McGuinness captures similar moments in his book, such as the woman feeding the geese near Folly Bridge and the young man he saw proposing to a woman near J.M.W. Turner's view in Raleigh Park.

There are a lot of streams in and around Oxford, and people have been drawn to them over the centuries. Here is Keats:

*For these last five or six days,
we have had regularly a Boat on
the Isis, and explored all the
streams about, which are more in
number than your eye lashes. We
sometimes skim into a Bed of
rushes, and there become
naturalized riverfolks, – there is
one particularly nice nest which
we have christened "Reynolds's
Cove", in which we have read
Wordsworth and talked as may
be.' (Letter to John Hamilton
Reynolds, 21 September 1817 – he
would deserve to be immortal if
that was all he had written).*

Still on the aquatic theme McGuinness mentions the Floating Chapel, moored near Hythe Bridge, until it sank in 1868. When it was re-established on dry land it was in the building that is now the Bangkok House Thai Restaurant. It was in an Egyptian revival style – perhaps an allusion to Isis? Apparently there was a notice in the vestibule which read, 'No pipes to be lighted till the text is given out.'



Boatman's Chapel at Hythe Bridge Street. Doesn't make it to Christopher Hibbert's *The Encyclopedia of Oxford*. St George's Tower is in the background

Salter's for decades was central in Oxonian river-life, as boat builders and organisers of steamer trips. McGuinness writes that 'old photos show boats being assembled or launched', but is not specific. One shows *The Isis* life-boat being stored in their yard ready for its launch in May 1866, after a parade round the city. It was actually built by Forrestt's of Limehouse, London, the subscription being raised in Oxford. It was launched opposite where the College Barges used to be, with Grandpont Villas (still there) in the background. It was then transported to Hayle in Cornwall, where it did sterling service for twenty-one years. One of the crew for the launch was the Brasenose Fellow James John Hornby, later Headmaster of Eton.



Launch of *The Isis*. 5 May 1866. Grandpont Villas in the background.



Life-boat launched from Salter's yard. Circa 1900. This is now 'The Head of the River'.

McGuinness ventures to what in the psychic geography of Oxford is beyond ultima thule – Watlington Road and the motor works. He does not mention the pub *The Bull Nose Morris* (now boarded up), or the gasometer opposite, now terminally depressed, with its surreal stair-way to heaven.



Cowley Gasometer (built 1960) from Watlington Road. In happier days..



Stairway to Heaven: the Cowley Gasometer.

I'd love to arrange a video of Led Zeppelin's 'Stairway to Heaven', with a model in slinky gold lamé, but I suppose Health and Safety would not allow it. The song is possibly one of my eight in Roy Plomley's little game:

*There's a lady who's sure all
that glitters is gold
And she's buying a stairway to
heaven
When she gets there she knows,
if the stores are all closed
With a word she can get what she
came for.*

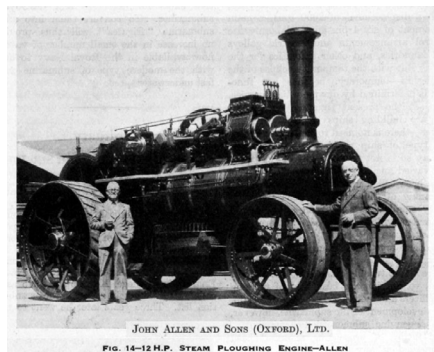
(Songwriters: Robert Plant and
Jimmy Page)

Factories have gone, as *Real Oxford* records. Lucy's Eagle Ironworks on Walton Well Road was replaced with flats. I used to live in one, overlooking St Sepulchre Cemetery, where Jude the Obscure is buried – in so far as a fictional character can be buried in a real place. Benjamin Jowett is buried there – he was real enough. I photograph cast-iron manhole covers from the foundry when I see them – so I have something in common with Jeremy Corbyn.

On Between Towns Road, a few hundred yards from where Ronny Barker lived as a child (now blue-plaques), there used to be the John Allen factory, founded in 1868. It manufactured traction engines and steam-rollers.



The preserved wall of the John Allen Factory. A bas-relief of a ploughing-engine is visible.



One of their products was the ploughing engine, which worked in pairs, with a steel cable running between them. Buy one get one free? The last time I saw a pair in real operation (as opposed to a steam-fair) they were dredging the pond in Tipton Park – some time in the 'fifties. They are mentioned in Hardy's poem for the Jubilee of *The Cornhill Magazine*;

*The steel-roped plough now rips
the vale,
With cog and tooth the sheaves are
won,
Wired wheels drum out the
wheat like hail;*

I suppose almost no one knows what he is talking about, especially those critics who think literature is wrapped up in the circle of its own discourse.



'The steel-roped plough'. A pair of ploughing engines at work.



A ploughing engine at work.

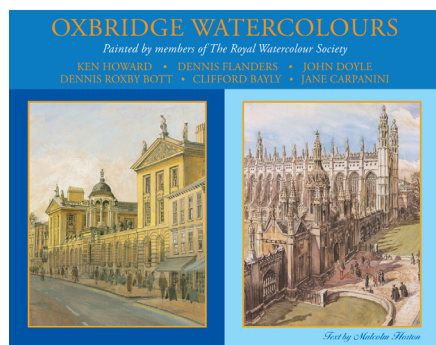
There are garages that have gone, just when you need them with fuel running out. There was one on Oxpens Road until only the other day, now buried by burgeoning buddleias. There was one down the Abingdon Road – now a car-wash. What is it John Webster says? 'Churches, and cities (which have diseased like to men)/ Must have like death that we have.'

Not much to complain about in *Real Oxford*, although there is sometimes an irritating tendency to switch into the snobby and would-be savvy mode of Ernest Hemingway, confident that he knew, for instance, where was the best place to buy firewood in Paris. There's an example on p. 160 in which McGuinness writes about the Grog Shop in Jericho, 'where there was always some under the counter special to be had' – only if you were in the know though, and matey with the proprietor. Also reminds me slightly of Richard E. Grant in *Posh Nosh*. He is *au fait* with where to buy the best second-hand clothes – although I understand that is a sign of white privilege. He devotes too much time, I think, to Akiport down the Abingdon Road. He spends so much time in shops and little cafés and bars that I'm surprised he gets any work done. Mind you I think that reading Clough's diaries. McGuinness is tolerant and open to experience, but sometimes anger insists on breaking out, as when he describes the marketing for the Beaumont Gate in the Abbey Road development of £1.3 million duplexes, in which unreal computer generated images of countryside blot out 'scruffy allotments'. He even disapproves of the name: 'another meaningless slab of nominative cleansing beloved of developers.' He is irritated by Morse, where plots involve an Academic

in Sanskrit who murders someone with an Anglo-Saxon brooch in revenge for a bad review. I'd better be careful.

Real Oxbridge?

Oxbridge Watercolours: Painted by Members of the Royal Watercolour Society. Text by Malcolm Horton. (Contemporary Watercolours Ltd., 2021. Vine House Distribution. ISBN 9780952648086). £14.99.



In *Brideshead Revisited* Charles Ryder thinks of Oxford in the 'twenties as 'a city of aquatint'. It still is, especially on spring mornings: all those sharp and crisp lines, as if produced on a drawing board, which many of the buildings were, and the pale, washed-out colours. But the city appears in other media, including oils and watercolours. This collection gathers together watercolours of Oxford and Cambridge by members of the Royal Watercolour Society. There is a venerable tradition of representations of the two towns in watercolour, of which Turner is the most distinguished ex-

emplar, and the Society itself goes back to 1804, becoming 'Royal' in 1884.

Each illustration is accompanied by a short essay on each of the colleges and other buildings. Unlike McGuinness's *Real Oxford*, this collection goes for the 'lions', the well-known iconic subjects that is. In an age when reliable artistic representation is supposed to be in retreat it is nice to see a collection in which architectural literacy is respected. It does justice to the fact that many of the images were conceived on the drawing board, so it follows that faithful tributes respect that fact. The artists represented are Ken Howard, Dennis Flanders, John Doyle, Dennis Roxby Bott, Clifford Bayly and Jane Carpanini. At £14.99 it is good value.

Most of the images are of familiar views, although Dennis Flanders's view of the Radcliffe Camera and St Mary's on p.14 will puzzle many at first. Some of them are now a couple of decades old, so that Dennis Roxby Bott's Radcliffe Camera and the east front of Brasenose College does not have the railings and the acacia peeking over the roof disappeared long ago. The artists have not been drawn to very modern buildings, with the exception of Jane Carpanini's pictures of Giles Gilbert Scott's Hartland House at St. Anne's College (which Pevsner calls 'squared up Georgian') and Peter Chamberlain's neo-Byzantine structure at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. No Powell and Moya then. The Bridges of Sighs in both universities are here. Hoxton says that the one in Cambridge is 'far prettier perhaps than its rather prosaic namesake in Venice.' Yes, perhaps. The big surprise in the collection is Clifford Bayly's view of Reginald Blomfield's Oxford and Cambridge

Club in Pall Mall. This admitted women as full members as late as 1996.

The images here are in the clear light of day, and lovers of the universities will miss the fabric emerging from swirling mysterious mists, what Waugh calls 'the soft vapours of a thousand years of learning'. There is nothing as wacky as Chaim Soutine's depictions of Ceret in the south of France, for instance, nothing that matches the startling kinetic juxtapositions Gerard Manley Hopkins records in his 'To Oxford': 'the one peculiar of their pleased eye'. And what about some moonlight pictures, in that transformative and transfiguring light which Coleridge writes about in *Biographia Literaria*: 'the sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffuse over a known and familiar landscape'? Excellent examples in the genre are John Malchair's (1730-1812) four views in Broad Street, Oxford, one, in the Victoria and Albert Museum, precisely timed: 6.0 p.m. 1 January 1790. In the Oxford pictures in Hoxton's collection, it is the pale stone that is mainly on view – not much of what Betjeman in 'St. Barnabas, Oxford' called 'thy reddened remorselessness, Cardigan Street'. The staffage in the scenes is fairly routine. There is nothing as vivid as Turner's boys flying kites in front of Christ Church (enigmatic emblems there?) or the stone-cutters in front of Worcester College (both in the Ashmolean Museum).

One final word. I hate that word 'Oxbridge' and refuse to use it. It seems to have been coined by Thackeray, and must count as just one more of his aesthetic crimes. It suggests the two places are joined at the hip like Siamese twins. In fact they are very different. The conjunction don't please.

BERNARD RICHARDS

Sir – The *University Bulletin* of 18 October announced, without any explanation, that the OUP bookshop is the High Street has now closed permanently. Unlike other shops, it failed to reopen after the first lockdown and some of us have long suspected that the Press's intention was to close it for good. But however much it may have been expected, the shop's disappearance from the Oxford scene is to be deplored. Not only was it a showcase and advertisement for the Press, but it was also a major asset for its many academic customers, an ancillary library, a facilitator of scholarship and learning, and to some extent a draw for tourists.

The compensatory eleven bays of OUP books in Blackwell's Norrington Room, promised in the same *Bulletin* (and about which Blackwell's staff currently appear to know almost nothing), will be a very inadequate substitute. It will no longer be

TO THE EDITOR

possible to browse the whole range of new OUP publications week by week; while the Press's multitudinous local authors, accustomed to the convenience of ordering books in the High Street using their authors' discount and for free over-the-counter delivery, will be particularly disadvantaged. Presumably if they order via Blackwell's they will no longer qualify for the discount; while if they order personally by phone or email from the Press's Kettering depot they will have to pay postage on their purchases.

By contrast, the Cambridge University Press shop, in the centre of Cambridge, remains open, fully stocked, and apparently thriving, to judge by the number of buyers and browsers who frequent it. Why is Oxford so different? One suspects that this is a cost-cutting measure, one of many recently introduced by the Press, designed to ameliorate a difficult financial situation the full extent of which has yet to be revealed. Meanwhile, the shop's closure adds to the sense of dereliction which already hangs over the city centre. Town and gown are both the losers. We can only hope that the future tenants of 116-17 High Street do not choose to specialise in Harry Potter tee-shirts and Rule Britannia mugs.

Yours sincerely

JOHN MADDICOTT

Exeter College

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

- Barbara Harriss-White is an Emeritus Fellow of Wolfson College
- Peter Oppenheimer is a Student of Christ Church
- G.R. Evans was Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History at Cambridge
- David Palfreyman is Bursar of New College
- Bernard Richards is an Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College